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Jordan

AGRICULTURAL BIOTECHNOLOGY ANNUAL

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Report Highlights:

Jordan has recently issued new biotechnology regulations that mandate the labeling of biotech food and feed.

Section I. Executive Summary:

Jordan has recently introduced new regulations on biosafety of biotechnology products, but Jordan still lacks the technical ability to enforce laws on biotechnology.

Section II. Biotechnology Trade and Production:

Barley and wheat are the only two cereal crops produced in Jordan. In seasons with adequate rainfall, Jordan produces only 10 percent of its consumption. There is a small amount of resources devoted to biotechnology research by some universities working in cooperation with the National Center for Agricultural Research and Extension (NCARE) and regional institutions such as the International Center for Agricultural Research in the Dry Areas (ICARDA).

Jordan's promising dairy and poultry sectors import all of their corn and soybean meal requirements from the United States and other sources that might use GM seeds. There is no testing mechanism to determine if such feed contains modified organisms. NCARE is developing its capacity to perform such testing within the coming years.

Section IV. Biotechnology Policy:

There is no clear agricultural biotechnology framework. To date, no biotech crops have been introduced or approved in the country. The Cabinet has approved the Ministry of Environment (MoEn) (<http://www.moen.gov.jo>) regulation based on the Cartagena Protocol, which will enter into force in August 2009. The regulation covers trade in biotech organisms, including biotech products.

Standards for the labeling of pre-packaged foods are determined by the Jordan Institution for Standards and Metrology (JISM) (<http://www.jism.gov.jo>) under Regulation JS 9:2001, passed in March 2001. The regulation is equivalent to the Codex general standard for labeling pre-packaged foods. The main clauses in this standard are as follows:

- Name of the food
- List of ingredients
- Net contents and drained weight
- Name and address
- Country of origin
- Lot identification
- Date marking and storage instructions
- Instructions for use
- Quantitative labeling of ingredients
- Irradiated foods
- Exemptions from mandatory labeling requirements
- Optional labeling
- Presentation of mandatory information

The new biotech regulation issued by the Ministry of Environment state that each food and feed importer has to affix a label stating whether the product contains GMOs in accordance with the JISM Regulation. The implementing agencies will be Jordan Food and Drug Administration (JFDA) and the Ministry of Agriculture.

No trade barriers have been imposed on any imported product. However, consumer awareness about biotech and active anti-GM NGOs may put future pressure on the trade in biotech products.

The new regulation and the wide remit of the committee entrusted to conduct the technical studies and approvals on biotechnology products could create trade barriers in the course of the committee's work.

According to the law, importers are held fully accountable for insuring that the label accurately describes the contents. A shipment might be rejected based on label ambiguity, even if it is only a printing error.

Section V. Marketing:

The new regulation legalizes the marketing of biotech crops in Jordan. Producers are willing to utilize biotechnology if it will increase profits. With importers, the question of profit will play a major role in their trade decisions. Consumers are expected to be highly reluctant to purchase such products due to lack of knowledge and the availability of substitute products; mandatory labeling may negatively affect consumer demand. In addition, religious beliefs may play a critical role in the consumer's decision-making process.